students' time. The campaign focused on building trust and providing tangible support, such as laying the foundation for ongoing community dialogue and problem-solving. Each partner worked with a community mobilization team, two or three staff identifying communities in need of primary education services for over-age students, and working to mobilize the level of support and commitment to education in each identified community. The Afghan organization partners had worked in community mobilization previously,[19] so each organization had two or three community-mobilization specialists. In two-thirds of the communities, the mobilization team met with three or more stakeholder groups including the village council, village leaders, *mullahs*[20], and parents. Fewer than 10% of these meetings were in large groups, a third were individual meetings, a fifth were small group meetings, and others were conducted in a combination of formats. Table 9 lists the concerns reported to the Mobilization teams by the various stakeholder groups.

Table 9[21]: Problems Working with Communities to Establish AL Centers

Practical Problems Encountered by Mobilization Teams	% Mentioning problem	Numbers of Sites
Gender-Related		
Q6b – Finding female mentors	40%	1,447
Q6a – Discussing propriety of female attendance	20%	722
Program Logistics		
Q6c – Agreeing on the class location	20%	739
Q6e – Scheduling class times	19%	686
Other		
Q6d – Envisioning the formal school system interactions	8%	301
Q6f – Other problems	20%	725

Although female attendance was mentioned as a problem at all AL sites, the problem usually resolved itself during mobilization team discussions with the Shuras.[22] Still, in 20% of the sites, fostering female enrollment required significant time and energy to address issues related to the availability of teachers, the location and quality of school sites, class schedules, security, among other issues. The biggest obstacle to fostering female enrollment was a shortage of female teachers. Some partners explored the following strategies to remedy that.

- Sponsoring intensive tutoring for outstanding female students to serve as substitute teachers (which also gave them a foothold in an interesting career);
- Recruiting and shuttling female teachers from nearby villages;
- Coaching *Shuras* to encourage their most qualified women to be trained as teachers;
- Urging *Shuras* to be approve male teachers for female classes;

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several students, and, in Kandahar, the deaths of AL program staff coupled with night letter threats led to the cancellation of some other classes. As tragic as these incidents are, remarkably they have not shaken out-of-school youth's strong commitment to education.

[19] Three of the Afghan organizations had worked in Afghanistan during the Taliban period and beyond; and two had worked in refugee communities outside of Afghanistan. Often this work was not in primary education, but mobilization of community support for a program was a key part of each organization's strategy.

[20] Islamic religious leaders.

[20] For more information on the APEP M+E instrumentation, please contact jintili@aiweb.com.

[21] For more information on the APEP M/E instrumentation, please contact jintili@aiweb.com.

[22] Although Shura Councils existed prior to the APEP project, the AL mobilization teams can be credited with prompting the development of many more through their successful efforts to stimulate and fortify the educational market.

- Working with *Shuras* to approve co-educational classes.

Mixed classes are not common in Afghanistan and were initially seen as making female students vulnerable. APEP programs therefore began with only a few mixed gender classes. After the program's first successes in communities in the first three provinces, and with the inclusion of a female-owned and operated partner organization as part of the expansion (AWEC), these classes grew. By the end of the first grade of the expansion group, 16% of the classes were mixed gender; they increased to about 23% by the end of Grade 2.

Differing Attitudes towards Female Education

Community attitudes towards female education differed greatly among villages even in the same province. For example, in one province, there was only an estimated 20% female participation in one village and 90% participation in another. In some but not all villages, opposition to mixed-gender classes was intense, making the establishment of any female class impossible, even though there was support for initiating an AL class for the boys, even though there had been no opportunity under the Taliban to provide education to girls and women in the village. Objections to female education were (in language close to the way it was expressed in Dari or Pashto).

- Photos might be taken of girls.
- Girls just should not go.
- Males might enter girls' classes.
- Security issues are too much for girls to go.
- Girls must work.
- More focus on Islamic subjects is needed.

Similar community attitudes are seen across provinces. Overall, seven provinces – Uruzgan[23], Paktya, Kapisa, Farah, Kabul and Balkh – stand out as hostile to co-education. At least three-quarters of the villages raised one or more concerns about female enrollment requiring extensive debate. Conversely, five provinces – Kunduz, Laghman, Parwan, Baghlan, and Logar – could be labeled generally positive towards coeducation, with less than a quarter of the villages voicing concern.

Table 10 presents contrasting regional attitudes and the spectrum of attitudes and responses to female education. Table 10 presents the more negative end, but some villages revealed such a community bias *in favor* of female education that a male Mentor headed the girls' instruction in one community. Another village favorable towards female education even allowed their girls to register for the AL program without an accompanying parent. In another instance, positive support, classmates voluntarily carried their legless girlfriend, injured in the war, just so she could participate in the AL classes.[24]

[23] The section now created as the independent Dai Kundi province.
[24] This incident was learned during a site visit to Laghman Province, June 2005.

Table 10: Attitude Differences Concerning Female Enrollment by Province

Report by Province[25]	# Sites Reporting for the Province	% of AL Sites where Mobilization Teams Reported Concerns about Female Education					
		Female Education in general	Finding female mentors	Class Location	Class Schedule	Formal School System	Other Concern S
Baghlan	400	5	20	9	3	1	2
Balkh	177	36	65	0	45	44	16
Farah	115	30	69	34	32	31	2
Faryab	121	9	26	22	3	7	7
Ghazni	267	21	20	39	2	3	3
Kabul	137	52	69	58	58	7	7
Kapisa	128	33	73	19	46	34	19
Khost	130	31	42	23	30	23	25
Kunduz	280	3	5	4	19	<1	0
Laghman	315	1	6	5	0	0	<1
Logar	286	27	13	20	37	1	5
Nangarhar	401	4	39	8	1	0	62
Paktya	312	71	96	17	5	1	46
Parwan	161	4	10	2	4	3	16
Sari Pul	153	3	57	9	10	22	52
Uruzgan	212	20	100	100	86	16	45

Factors Affecting Whether Classes Continue

Factors affecting the start-up or continuation of classes in the community and the inclusion of female students in the classes are associated principally with the attitude of the *Shura* and how well the mobilization team has been able to convince them to advocate for the class with potential students.

Community Role in Supporting Students

When asked, 'Who in the community provides important support for students?' approximately 90% of the teachers reported various groups, such as the parents, "all" the villagers, the village elders, educated community members, and members of the *Shura*'s Education Committee; one report mentioned the Governor. The teachers' responses distinguished between the community's general "permission" to parents to allow their children to attend school, and their duty to follow up on the reasons for absenteeism. Together these responses suggest active *Shura* involvement in promoting student participation in slightly more than two-thirds (69%) of the classes. Three percent of the teachers reported that *Shura* members offered to volunteer in the AL class if it would be helpful and in 5% of the villages, the *Shuras* demonstrated their support by buying additional classroom supplies. Table 11 summarizes the *Shuras*' activities supporting the AL program.[26]

[25] Data for this table were not received from Kandahar province due to violence occurring during the M/E period.
[26] For more details on the Shura's role, please see Kissam, E. and J. Intili (2004).

Table 11: *Shura* Support to AL Program[27]

Role of the *Shura*	% reporting
Provides general, unspecified help or support.	34
Promotes student participation, encouraged attendance and motivated parents to support the students.	26
Guarantees security for the AL classes.	21
Members monitored the AL class.	6
Provided drinking water, a heater, or other class supplies.	4
Failed to offer help.	7

The Parents' Role in Supporting Students

The parents also play an integral role in the supporting the process. The longitudinal survey of a subset of the AL sites (ALLS)[28] has indicated that parental support during Grade 2 increased in more than two-thirds (70%) of the villages. The most common, almost universal, mode of parental support mentioned is the parents' encouragement to their children about schoolwork and class attendance. For out-of-school youth to attend the classes, parents had to alter their daily routines and give students respites from their family responsibilities. Twenty-two percent (22%) of the AL teachers reported that some parents actually reduced their children's domestic work load to make more time for educational activities. More interesting were the reports that the entire family was increasingly becoming involved in the completion of homework assignments, pointing to the fact that learning is a highly contagious activity. According to the ALLS, Grade 1 reports, 30% of the students claimed they received parental homework assistance, with 24% being helped by the father, and 6% being helped by the mother,[29] and 39% of the students documented that a sibling helped with schoolwork. Those same reports by Grade 2 students showed almost half, 43%, receiving help by some relative, with it being a sibling in only 11% of the cases and some other relative in another 14% of the cases. All in all, more than two-thirds of the students in the ALLS sample got help with their homework from someone at home.

The reports from teachers correlate with the students' own reports about getting help with homework. By the end of Grade 2, 56% of the teachers recorded that parents were helping with homework. The term *parents* often referred to any family member, and *helping* ranged from hands-on assistance to mere encouragement. Seven percent of the teachers also mentioned that family assistance included acquiring classroom supplies. Finally, teachers reported that only 29% of the students received no help from family members.

The Family's Role in Supporting the Female Teachers

A final dimension of community support to AL teachers is the level of support they, themselves, receive from their families. Four out of five AL teachers (81%) said that their families were more supportive of their work in the AL program during Grade 2 than they had been during Grade 1. One out of five teachers said their family's level of support had not changed between the two years.

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[27] These data are a coding of a subset of responses (n= 530), selected randomly, following SPSS-automated procedures, from the APEP monitoring data for item 45 in Form 7. Although all teachers responded to this item, it was deemed to burdensome to code the entire 6800 comments; a subset was selected. Note in the more detailed longitudinal sample data, the proportion of shura support is even higher - 58% of these teachers mention it. For more information on APEP's M+E data, contact jintili@aiweb.com

[28] For more information about APEP M+E activities, contact jintili@aiweb.com.

[29] The interview format allowed multiple answers, so that some students actually may have received help from multiple relatives, such as the father and a sibling.

As with the students, support from families and other community members can determine whether female teachers and mentors continue teaching. Societal pressures can also undermine the AL structure, as where a village leader married the AL teacher mid-way through the class term and would not allow her to return to her post. In this case, the AL mobilization team sprung into action, and, after working through the *Shura* with the family to arrange a solution, the class eventually continued, albeit sans all male participation and any photography.

Peer-to-Peer Classroom Networks [30]

One tenet underlying the AL approach to educational achievement is active, student-centered instruction, being responsive to students' particular skills, abilities, needs, and interests. It involves working with students in different groups, applying learning to concrete situations or with concrete materials, and reinforcing participation and learning through peer networks. We believe this is an important lever for enhancing and reinforcing girls' education inside and outside the classroom. In our longitudinal-study interviews and classroom observations, we found 76% of the peer networks seemed to result from the teacher asking that students help one another. In 50% of the classes, observers noted that teachers structured assignments to be completed in small groups. They also noted that peer-network learning emerged naturally from teacher and student interaction in 59% of classes. When interviewers asked whether students received assistance from classmates, almost everyone in both gender groups (99% of the boys and 97% of the girls) answered *yes.* (Notably, these percentages remained high, but were gender-reversed, when students were asked whether they, themselves, ever helped other classmates.)

Interestingly, we saw that teachers are more likely to assign group work in male classes and males are more likely to report both that they ask for and receive help ($p<.02$). Girls, on the other hand, are more likely to report they initiate collaborative work themselves without the teachers' encouragement.

AL Students' Aspirations[31]

The AL Longitudinal Study data (ALLS) show that AL students have high, gender-neutral aspirations for education and occupation.

Educational Aspirations

Table 12 demonstrates that, not only is there no shortage of females who want an advanced degree, but the percentage is increasing with greater exposure to educational opportunities. At the end of Grade 1, more than a third of the girls want to continue through high school; and more than half want to continue through college. By the end of grade 2, almost two-thirds of the girls want to complete university or beyond. While there is no reason to expect that male and female aspirations would be significantly different, and indeed they are not, we expect that the barriers to realizing their aspirations, such as the proximity of schools and economic constraints already discussed, affect the genders differently, in particular the distance of the school from the home community. While 55% of the respondents (both boys and girls) mentioned distance as an issue, in their comments about what single thing would inhibit their continuation, 52% of the female students identified distance from school as a major barrier whereas none of the boys mentioned it. Boys mentioned the need to work and age eligibility more often than did girls.

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[30] Findings from analyses of ALLS Items e10, at the end of Grade 2.

[31] ALLS Q. P-4 through P-7are designed to solicit the students' educational aspirations, while Q. Z-7 and Z-8 are seeking the students' vocational training interests.

Table 12: Girls' and Boys' Educational Aspirations

Educational Aspiration	Girls		Boys	
	% End of Grade 1	% End of Grade 2	% End of Grade 1	% End of Grade 2
Primary school completion	4	0.5	2	1
High School completion	35	37	27	28
College Degree	55	40	68	48
Advanced Degree	4	23	1	23
Can't Say	1	-	2	-

In general, however, students' responses to the ALLS show a high level of parental support and a strong awareness of education as an important investment for the future, [32] and girls' aspirations regarding continuing education are similar to those of boys.

Occupational Aspirations

There were no significant differences between the genders regarding aspirations to become doctors, managers, shopkeepers or other generally technical occupations. We did see occupational preferences in that girls were more likely to choose teaching, and boys were more likely to select specifically technical occupations other than Engineer.

Two traditional and highly prestigious professions dominated students' answers about their occupational aspirations: 39% said they wanted to become a teacher and 32% said they wanted to become a doctor; 7% said they were interested in a managerial or technical job; 3% professed interest in becoming an engineer; and 2% aspired to more traditional occupations, like farming, migrant labor or being a shopkeeper. Miscellaneous career ambitions included journalist, *mullah*,[33] airplane pilot, calligrapher, and professor of literature. One student stated specifically that her aspiration was to become the head of her village's women's *Shura*. Several other students had more practical aspirations, stating a desire to continue their educations and to have traditional careers as tailors.

More than half of the AL students are interested in vocational training as an alternative to high school and university-level education. But, here too, their aspirations following vocational training were provincial. Two-thirds (67%) of the ALLS respondents who were interested in vocational training named tailoring, embroidery, or carpet-weaving. Of course Afghanistan's labor market and business environment could not provide adequate employment for so many workers in these traditional occupations. More contemporary occupations mentioned in connection with vocational training include auto mechanics, carpentry, metal work, and driving, as well as journalism, teaching, and engineering. While the latter three occupations are often thought of as requiring a university-level education, in fact, the areas also offer careers where medium-term vocational training might well be effective.

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[32] Seventy percent of students believed education was important for the future, and 40% felt their parents wanted them to continue with their education.

[33] Religious leaders in the community.

Outcomes: How Girls Do in AL Classes[34]

The M/E system measures outcomes in two dimensions: sustained participation in the class and academic performance. The APEP M/E unit tracks the students' attendance, dropout, completion, and performance records as part of its responsibilities. In all of these areas, AL female students perform at the same level or better than, the AL male students.

Attendance and Participation

There is no statistically significant difference between the profiles of males and females attendance or dropout levels; and the dropout rate is low. Compared to the formal schools, we estimate that, so far, the APEP AL class dropout rate is half that of the formal schools.[35] We should note here, however, that the AL dropout rate may not actually be as low as was recorded, because, during the M/E site visits, we observed that some of the absenteeism and dropouts are not reported because, "it would discourage the students." Nevertheless, even with a 4-5% adjustment for reporting discrepancies, we calculate that the APEP AL class dropout rate falls well below that of the formal schools. Table 13 presents the findings.

Table 13: AL Students' Attendance and Dropout Rates Compared to Formal Schools[36]

Indicator	# of Students	%	Mean (Std. Dev) Per class	# (%) of Classes Affected
OVERALL APEP STUDENTS				
Total absent any time	20,944	13	3.15 (6.48)	1,958 (29)
▪ Absent 15 days or less	18,655	11	2.81 (6.06)	1,784 (27)
▪ Absent 16 days or more	2,289	1	0.34 (1.41)	680 (10)
Total dropout students	3,217	2	0.48 (1.60)	928 (14)
APEP STUDENTS BY GENDER	N	Gender	Mean (std. dev.)	N (%) classes
▪ Total Males absent any time	7,984	11	1.20 (4.12)	898 (13)
▪ Males absent 16+ days	1,123	2	0.17 (1.08)	320 (5)
▪ Females absent any time	12,960	14	1.95 (5.18)	1,292 (19)
▪ Females absent 16+ days	1,166	1	0.17 (0.89)	396 (6)
▪ Total Male dropouts	1,447	2	0.22 (1.12)	409 (6)
▪ Total Females dropouts	1,770	2	0.27 (1.13)	565 (8)
Formal School Students for 2003-4, Average Dropout Rate Per Year				
▪ Average Dropout, Boys, Grades 1- 4	2,211,832	11	N/A	
▪ Average Dropout, Girls, Grades 1- 4	1,132,668	15		

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[34] Intili, J., Hamdard, D.M., Wafa, W., Mehry, A., Ghiassi, E., Hadi, P, Akbari, P., Khalid, S., Nasir, S and T. Hernandez, (2005). *Young Minds Blossom After Years of Turmoil; APEP's Accelerated Learning Program at 2nd Grade*. Kabul: APEP Consortium, Library items 130 and 131; Kissam, E, Wafa, W, Hamdard, D.M., Nasir, S. Akbari, P. (2005). *Report on APEP Accelerated Learning Program Student Achievement in Grade 1*. Kabul: APEP Consortium, Library item #35.

[35] Based on UNICEF WFP MICS, 2005, and UNICEF WFP NRVA, 2005.

[36] See Intili, J. (2005); contact jintili@aiweb.com for more information about the APEP M+E instruments. MoE statistics Based on UNICEF WFP Rapid Assessment Survey (RAS) data for 2003-4, provided in March 2005

Academic Performance

APEP measured student outcome achievements through a project-generated competency test, which ALLS interviewers administered to students as part of the ALLS study. The competency test assessed students' reading, writing, and mathematics skills. The test items were drawn from the MOE approved textbooks and included items from the Grade 1 textbook/curriculum, and grade 2 curriculum. Additionally, several tasks were designed to assess students' abilities to apply basic knowledge and skills to novel circumstances.[37] For the purposes of this assessment, students were expected to obtain a 50% score to be considered at grade level.[38] Interviewers observed students as they answered the questions and scored them on each as *fail, pass, or facile.* Students who successfully answered a question were given a pass and students who answered the question with great facility without hesitation were rated facile. Students who successfully answered all of the Grade 1 questions and at least one of the more advanced questions were considered to be above grade level.[39]

Findings from these analyses showed female students mastered the competencies at the same rate as male students.

- **In Grade 1**, female mean scores are consistently, but only slightly, higher than male mean scores in reading and writing; but the female mean scores are slightly lower than the male scores in math.
- **In Grade 2,** female mean scores are at the same level in math and general knowledge and statistically higher in reading and writing, than their male counterparts.[40]

Table 14 shows the proportions of AL students whose performance would rate a *pass* based on MOE criteria of at least 50% on an end-of-term test developed by teachers for their students.[41] Table 14 shows the AL program continues to support impressive achievements in teaching reading and math, and, at a more moderate rate, to improve the teaching of writing skills, a the core subject where slightly more students had problems in grade 1.

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[37] For more details on testing and methodology, see Kissam, E., *et al.* (2005). These items included four reading tasks where students were asked to read novel sentences that are not contained in the Grade 1 textbook; three novel sentence-writing tasks; and four mathematical word problems that were either drawn from the Grade 2 textbook or developed by the APEP M&E staff.

[38] For more details on testing and methodology, see Kissam, E., *et al.* We chose this cut-point to standardize our pass-fail criterion for all items, using the same general criteria used by the MOE. The formal school system, quite appropriately, does not consider Grades 1 and 2 to be *pass/fail* grades. However, the MOE only establishes guidelines while individual teachers determine their own test items for assessing students' competency and their own criteria for pass/fail grades.

[39] A validation of researchers' scoring was undertaken with half the students in one province, and the scoring was found to be consistent with the scoring categories and their definitions.

[40] Female mean scores are .94 points higher in reading ($p<.001$) and .73 points higher in writing ($p<.02$) than are male mean scores.

[41] The APEP M/E Unit believes that the ALLS student performance assessment is a more demanding instrument than that used in the typical formal school system. APEP is still in the process of collecting samples from the formal school system so that a comparison can be validated.

Table 14: AL Students 2nd Grade Performance: All Subjects (N=546)

Performance Level	2nd Grade Reading	change from 1st Grade Reading	2nd Grade Writing	change from 1st Grade Writing	2nd Grade Math	% change from 1st Grade Math
% At least Pass Adequate Mastery = four or more items correct	94	+2 (was 92	91	+7 (was 84)	97	+3 (was 94)
▪ for Girls only	96	+4	92	+7	97	+3
▪ for Boys only	92	No change	89	+7	97	+3
% At Least Full Mastery - 7.3 or more items correct	83	+8 (was 75)	80	+13 (was 67)	82	-3 (was 85)
▪ for Girls only	86	+10	83	+15	81	-3
▪ for Boys only	77	+5	75	+11	83	-2
% Above Grade Level – nine or more items correct	76	+10 (was 66)	78	+24 (was 54)	76	+4 (was 72)
▪ for Girls only	80	+12	80	+25	75	+5
▪ for Boys only	67	+6	72	+22	78	+2

There is also a statistically significant relationship between student age and AL outcomes. Older students tend to achieve higher scores. In this analysis, we compared mean scores in math, reading, writing, general knowledge, and overall for three age groups; students who were 10 years old or younger; 11-14 years old; and 15 years old or more. The relationship between age and outcomes is more complex than between gender and outcomes. First, there were statistically significant differences among all age groups in math. But, in reading and writing, the performance outcomes between the age groups varied. Students who were 10 years old or younger were statistically indistinguishable from 11-14 year olds, but students 15 years and older did much better on average. At the same time, it is important to recognize that, although the oldest group has statistically higher performances than the two younger groups combined, even the younger students are doing very well. Table 15 shows the mean scores for these different age sub-groups within the AL student populations. Note that a score of 4 in any sub-scale is considered a *pass*, following Afghan government school standards; and a score of 8 is *full proficiency for the grade level*. Across subject areas, a composite score of 16 is rated a *pass* and a score of 32 is rated *full proficiency*.

Table 15: Mean Scores of AL Students by Age at the end of Grade 2

	<11 years (N=135)			11 to 14 years (N=280)			15 or older (N=131)		
Skills Area	**Overall**	**Females**	**Males**	**Overall**	**Females**	**Males**	**Overall**	**Females**	**Males**
Reading	9.90	9.98	9.69	10.07	10.48	9.24	10.93	11.17	10.33
Writing	9.46	9.44	9.50	9.74	10.03	9.16	10.60	10.95	9.76
Math	9.06	8.95	9.34	9.81	9.93	9.58	10.63	10.66	10.59
General Knowledge	10.36	10.47	10.11	10.65	10.84	10.27	11.30	11.38	11.12
Total Score	**38.79**	**38.84**	**38.64**	**40.28**	**41.28**	**38.25**	**43.47**	**44.15**	**41.78**

This relationship between age and performance was observable in overall scores. Although all AL students perform at least adequately to pass, the students 14 and younger seem to perform less well

than the students 15 and older. This suggests that some of the older students have made progress in skills development on their own as well as in school, and that their AL success relates to instruction which builds on prior, albeit rudimentary, foundations of math, reading, writing, and general knowledge.

Summary

Student performance indicates that the APEP AL program was able to overcome traditional gender inequities for the participating female students, assuring them equitable access and quality of service, as measured by outcomes. This required hard work and an ongoing process of pro-active fostering, monitoring and mentoring. In talking with the few students in the longitudinal study sample who either dropped out or are chronically absent, we find that the females fear being photographed, feel the community's disapproval, must work, or that their parents fear attending will create a breach of their security. In this context, work often refers to family responsibilities. Although a high proportion of parents have supported their children by lightening their household burden so that they can go to school, time constraints remain a significant hindrance. This becomes compelling when the community attitude runs cold because the AL class is either not going well or attracting negative attention. A seemingly natural respect for education is darkened by cynicism about how education will benefit the student and the family immediately.

Given these Afghan labor-market realities and the constraints on access to university-level education needed to enter professional careers, fostering female education will require that parents believe that the investment is worth the risks, whether they are security risks or the risk of a family's good reputation, or the time that is no longer spent doing chores or other home-based money-generating ventures. For example, if a daughter has learned to read and can subsequently protect the family from signing a bad contract or help family members use the postal system or the bank, this will be perceived as a benefit of her education. It would be wise for the APEP program to widen the AL curriculum to include a broader spectrum of occupational options, with a special emphasis on technical careers, where skilled workers are needed for economic development, and where education or training takes only 1-2 years, as opposed to lengthy university courses of study in medicine, teaching, or engineering.



FOSTERING EDUCATION FOR FEMALE, OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH IN AFGHANISTAN[1]

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Abstract
In 2003, in response to the lack of educational opportunities in Afghanistan for the general population and especially for females, the United States Agency for International Development funded the Afghanistan Primary Education Program (APEP). APEP offers emergency access to accelerated elementary education for out-of-school youth between ten and eighteen years of age, focusing on females. Between 2003 and 2005, APEP supported Accelerated Learning (AL) programs for 170,000 over-age youth in more than 3,000 villages in Afghanistan. This paper describes the program strategies and the significant results achieved for female youth.

The Context

In 2003, in response to the lack of educational opportunities for the general population and for females in particular, and to an educational structure in disarray after twenty years of war and turmoil in Afghanistan, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded the Afghanistan Primary Education Program (APEP), a consortium of Afghan non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international partners.[2] APEP offers emergency access to an accelerated elementary education program to out-of-school youth 10-18 years old with few or no educational opportunities, focusing on female out-of-school-youth.

APEP operates an AL component[3] in 17 of the 34 Afghan provinces so that over-aged students can quickly catch-up with their schooled peers and hope to enter the formal school system. Other APEP components focus on textbook production, radio-based teacher training, and capacity-building support to the Ministries of Education. The AL component is implemented through five Afghan NGOs, a British organization supporting children in crisis which is responsible for teacher training and an American monitoring and evaluation (M/E) firm.[4]

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[1] This paper is based on the work of the USAID Afghan Primary Education Program.

[2] Creative Associates International, Inc. (Creative), leads the consortium of four international organizations, Aguirre International, Division of JBS (AI), Children in Crisis (CIC), Media Support Solution (MSS) and American Manufacturers Export Group (AMEG), and 5 local Afghan organizations, Afghanistan Development Association (ADA), Afghan Women's Education Center (AWEC), Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (CHA), Coordination of Afghan Relief (CoAR), and Development and Humanitarian Services for Afghanistan (DHSA).

[3] For a review of different approaches to Accelerated Learning, and its meaning for Afghanistan, please see Intili J. and E. Kissam (2004a).

[4] The international organizations are Creative Associates International, Inc (Creative), Aguirre International, Division of JBS (AI), Children in Crisis (CIC), and the local implementers of AL are Afghanistan Development

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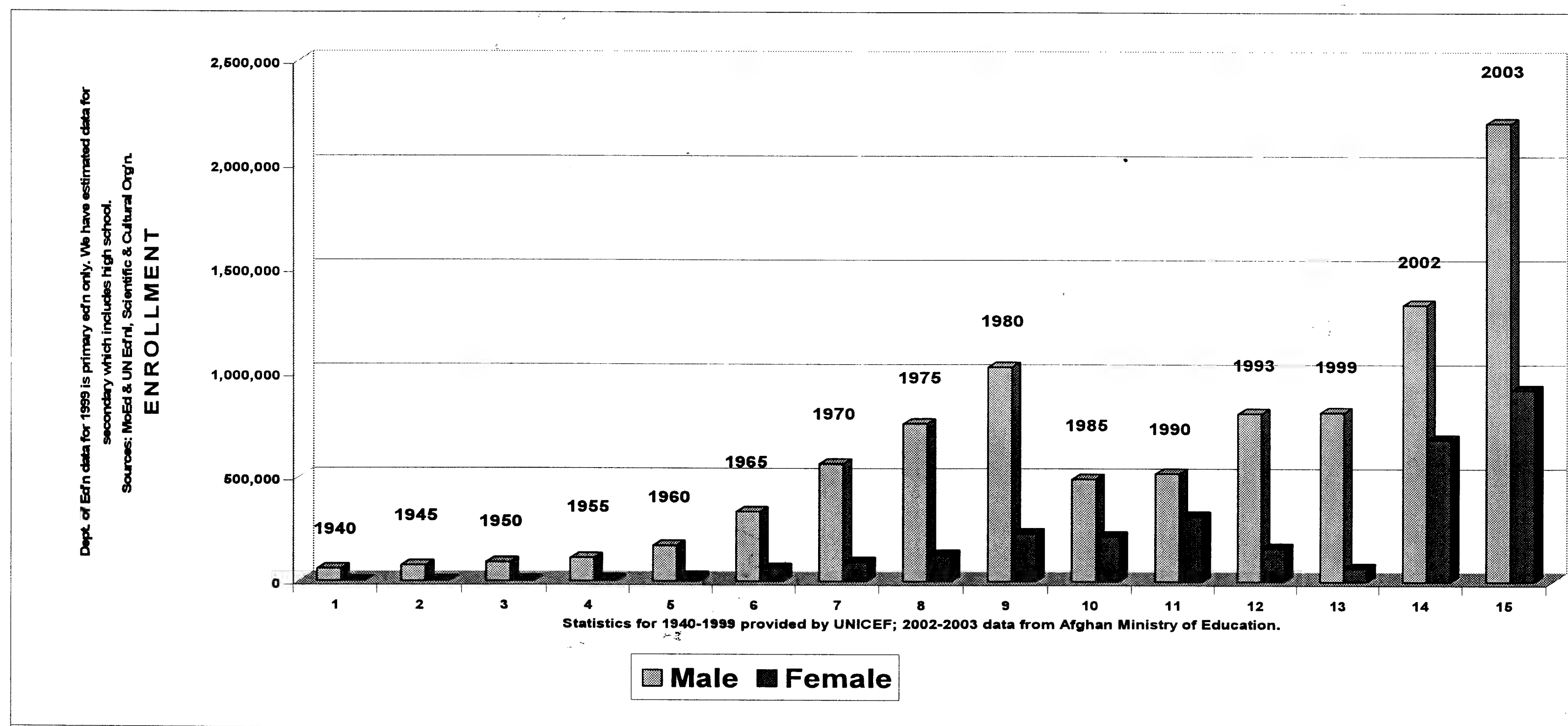
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Appendix 1: Growth of Female and Male Education in Grades 1-12 in Afghanistan 1940-2003 (Formal Schools)

	1940	1945	1950	1955	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1993	1999	2002	2003
Male	59,100	75,000	90,640	111,100	170,845	334,074	564,090	757,030	1,028,730	492,440	517,970	805,970	886,532	1,329,340	2,201,622
	98.5%	97.4%	95.4%	91.7%	88.1%	84.5%	86.0%	85.6%	81.7%	69.6%	62.5%	83.4%	92.7%	66.1%	70.6%
Female	900	2,000	4,350	9,990	23,155	61,394	92,030	127,345	229,690	215,390	311,220	160,360	64,110	680,660	918,843
	1.5%	2.6%	4.6%	8.3%	11.9%	15.5%	14.0%	14.4%	18.3%	30.4%	37.5%	16.6%	7.3%	33.9%	29.4%
Total	60,000	77,001	94,991	121,091	194,001	395,469	656,121	884,376	1,258,420	707,831	829,191	966,331	950,643	2,010,001	3,120,466
Male	59,100	75,000	90,640	111,100	170,845	334,074	564,090	757,030	1,028,730	492,440	517,970	805,970	811,495	1,329,340	2,201,622
Female	900	2,000	4,350	9,990	23,155	61,394	92,030	127,345	229,690	215,390	311,220	160,360	64,110	680,660	918,843



The APEP AL project outcomes show that gender inequities such as inequitable access to services and service quality can be overcome although the results are not the sole achievement. They are, however, an indicator of what can be achieved by paying particular attention to developing community support for educational programs and teacher training so that the benefits of participation in education for individual students, their families, and the community become clear.

Monitoring and Evaluation Data

This paper is based on findings from monitoring data solicited on community mobilization, classroom practice, and teacher demographic characteristics, and evaluation findings from a longitudinal study for Grades 1 and 2 of APEP's AL Program. The M/E team comprises provincial monitors supported by the implementing partners, researchers hired directly by the APEP M/E unit, and a team of seven staff and two consultants who organize, verify, analyze and report the data. Several methods are used. First, self-reporting, supported by site visits, related to community mobilization strategies and experiences, teacher demographics, training experiences, and a description of classroom outcomes collected at the completion of each grade level. Second, a longitudinal study of student outcomes and experiences in the program of a random sample of 560 students (seven students/class, eight classes/province) in ten of the 17 provinces (ALLS) collected at the end of each grade level. Third, a community case study including two AL sites in each of two provinces to focus on teachers' experiences, collected during period one month in each community.[5] Findings from M/E activities are provided in an integrated report for each grade level and shared with APEP partners and management at the end of each term.

Education in Afghanistan as of January 2005

According to the Ministry of Education (MOE), enrollment in the formal school system was approximately 4.5 to 5 million students in 2005, an increase of 50% from 3.1 million students in 2003. These numbers are good news; they demonstrate impressive progress. But a more cautionary view may be appropriate, considering what defines being in school. "School" often includes only two to three hours of study per day in overcrowded classrooms, where an average of 60 people occupy benches or maybe desks. Impressive as they are, these numbers do not begin to satisfy the appetites of the scores of children, youth and young adults who have no educational opportunities. A significant portion of the "older" illiterate students are seriously interested in becoming literate notwithstanding the significant barriers they face. The challenges of providing access to over-age education were the basis for USAID's APEP program.

The educational needs of illiterate youth are great in Afghanistan, but difficult to estimate because available data does not include the ages of enrolled students. UNESCO's Education for All Country Report (2000) estimates a maximum 20% literacy rate for adolescents and young adults between the ages of 15-24. This age cohort includes approximately 5.1 million young people, but only 240,000 are actually in school.[6] That leaves approximately 3.8 million adolescents and young adults in need

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(CHA), Coordination of Afghan Relief (CoAR), and Development and Humanitarian Services for Afghanistan (DHSA).

[5] For an in-depth description of the strategy for monitoring and evaluation, contact jintili@aiweb.com. The monitoring and evaluation instruments are too voluminous to be included with this paper. However, a description of the monitoring and evaluation strategy and protocols is available upon request.

[6] School-age population estimated at 4.5 million is based on demographic data from the United States Census Bureau International Database (2003). The baseline 2000 data for cohorts age 5-9, 10-14, and 15-19 years are adjusted by an estimated growth rate of 3.5% per year. Actual numbers of school-age children may differ from this estimate. The lower bound for growth rate is 2.4% (natural increase) but repatriation of refugees adds to this figure, so the higher estimate appears to be justified.

of educational opportunities to be able to continue through secondary school or vocational training. Similarly, UNICEF World Food Program [WFP] data analyses of Mobile Information & Communications Systems [MICS, 2005] show that more than half of the youth and young adults in every province is significantly compromised in functional literacy; the average literacy rate is lower than 30%. The issue of education and literacy has profound implications for the stability of Afghan society and for the country's future economic viability.

The Afghan education curriculum and the teacher trainers' work experiences show that, as students move from Grades 3 through 6, they learn to use their cognitive abilities to reason and parse meaning from statements, to organize their thoughts, to communicate effectively, and to better understand the implications of the acquired knowledge, not only for themselves but also for their communities. Learning these rudimentary skills, in turn, stimulates the students' yearning to learn more. Table 1,[7] summarizes the main skills taught in the elementary education curriculum:

Table 1 : Educational Attainment, Selected Elementary Grades, Afghan Formal Curriculum

Academic Attainment	Associated Strengths and Limitations:
END OF GRADE 3	
▪ Math: Basic addition, subtraction, division and multiplication; beginning fractions; and measurement properties. ▪ Language - Reading: Recognize basic words, antonyms, synonyms; read simple sentences; grammar and comprehension. ▪ Language - Writing: Construct simple sentences and three-sentence paragraphs; two-paragraph poems; and instructions. ▪ Life Skills: Health, safety and study skills (basic drug education, study skills, land-mine education).	Basic calculations - concrete operational thinking. Without basic achievement, students will not effectively extrapolate the learned skills to the outside world. Example, the issue of global-spatial relationships exists when applying numbers to real world situations, requiring control of language, and the ability to comprehend a world beyond the neighborhood.
END OF GRADE 4	
▪ Math, Science: five-digit numbers, place values, fractions, decimals, introduction to geometry; basic introduction to the solar system and, human and plant biology. ▪ Reading, Writing, 2nd Language: Read and understand simple sentences, recognize new words from context, write a well-ordered grammatical sentence. ▪ History, Geography: Different regional and country contributions to Afghanistan and its governance. ▪ Health, Life Skills, Arts, Sports: Basic hygiene and disease prevention; peace and diversity education; arts related to the real world, such as drawing, calligraphy, music; basic Afghan sports and culture.	Continue mastering basic reading, writing, math, introductory science and history. Moves from concrete operational thinking toward more abstract logical thinking. Little ability to test inference and assumptions, to discuss how skills apply to the real world; scant science and social studies knowledge with no ability to communicate in the second national language; only limited vocabulary in both the first and second languages.

[7] The authors compiled this table with the advice of the staff of Children in Crisis (CIC). CIC is the APEP partner responsible for designing and implementing teacher training in the Accelerated Learning (AL) project.

END OF GRADES 5 AND 6	
▪ Math, Science: Ratio, proportion, percentage; basic geometry; basic human biology and earth science. ▪ Reading, Writing, 2nd Language: Reading for meaning; writing accurate directions and accurately communicating an idea. ▪ History, Geography: Continents of the world and provinces of Afghanistan; relation of different peoples to each other. ▪ Health, Life Skills, Arts, Sustained focus on themes related to personal and family management, community relations, and some focus on career development.	In grade 5 and 6, they begin to test knowledge in real world; to use systems and logic; and to understand the relationship between theoretical and practical logic. Limited use of critical thinking. Without min. grade 6 achievement, students will have inadequate skills for strategic thinking, and instead remain immature with child-like beliefs and understandings. Rather than think critically, they are more likely to accept authoritative directives; rather than systematically assess arguments for logical explanations, they are more likely to accept incomplete statements and disorganized presentations.

Significant challenges exist for realizing the educational goals of maximizing enrollment; minimizing attrition and grade repetition, and ensuring gender equity and access throughout the country. An effective national campaign is needed to persuade the community leaders, parents and participants that their investment of time in education will translate into concrete benefits soon after enrollment and that expand directly with sustained and consistent education participation. Between 2002-2005, progress was dramatic in providing educational opportunities, but far more capacity-building is needed to compensate for the extensive destruction during the many years of war and to accommodate some 716,000 first-grade entrants each year.[8]

Females in Afghan Education

Throughout Afghanistan's history, females' access to education has been severely limited. The December 1979 Russian invasion put an end to much of the educational progress in the early 1970s, disrupting the management and provision of education nationwide. The Taliban government, 1994-2001, repressed women even more severely and female education left the national agenda. Since 2002 education has risen to the top of the nation's priority list, and total student enrollment has more than tripled (Appendix 1).

As a baseline for this discussion, we use the Gender Parity Index (2000). It reports that in 2000, females constituted only approximately 10% of the primary-school student population. MoE statistics indicate that more than 1.3 million girls enrolled in 2003, and that MoE was planning to double that enrollment in 2003-2004, hoping to ensure retention for the full, 12-year curriculum. MoE statistics indicate that the female-enrollment rate supports progress toward Afghanistan's goals. Table 2 gives the female-to-male ratio for student enrollment at three levels of schooling as of 2003.

[8] Estimates based on Afghanistan's Ministry of Education (2003) regional student enrollment data for Eastern, Northern, Central, Western, and Southern regions.

Table 2: MOE % Female Enrollment in Formal Schools by Region[9]

Region	% of Enrollees in Primary School (grades 1-6) who are Female	% of Enrollees in Middle School (grades 7-9) who are Female	% of Enrollees in High School (grades 11-12) who are Female
Northern	59	39	46
Central	41	12	8
Eastern	49	8	4
Western	53	33	42
Southern	12	6	7
Nationwide	**44**	**23**	**25**

Table 2 shows that female participation rates in middle school for Northern and Western region schools are lower than for high school. This probably reflects resources available past elementary school for girls and, at the high school level, both male and female retention in areas where attitudes about female education are more positive. However, most remarkable in Table 2 is the great regional disparity: The Southern region has extremely low enrollment at all education levels; the Central and Eastern regions decline to comparably poor female enrollment at middle and upper levels. The 2005 WFP UNICEF National Rural Vulnerability Assessment [NRVA] indicates that, as of 2004, the literacy rate for Afghan women was less than one-third of that for men of similar age.[10] Table 3 provides an analysis from the Afghan Education Management unit (UNICEF WFP MICS, 2005), demonstrating the same gender-based inequity.

Table 3. Literacy Rate by Gender and Age Category



If Afghan women are to have equitable access to technical, professional, and managerial positions in the workplace, the gender-equity reforms already in progress in primary education need to be encouraged for middle- and upper-school age females. Progress is being made. The APEP project was designed to target this over-age population, with its special requirement that 56% of the enrolled population be female. Other programs that provide educational opportunities for illiterate and under-

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[9] Based on Ministry of Education enrollment data by province, 2003; rounded to nearest percent.

[10] Obtaining an accurate total enrollment count, and the percent increase in those numbers, is hampered by the lack of a population census in the country. MoE figures for school enrollment and estimates of population size within a province may not be consistent. For example, as of 2003, there seemed to be 110% of the population enrolled in Kunduz. This circumstance led to the realization that percent changes in the enrollment count has to be analyzed by province, and should factor in what the likely "eligible" population for the province is. Further, the population in any province is not necessarily stable because of the constant influx of returning refugees. This, too, complicates calculation of the denominator, when figuring the percent of female enrollment or the ratio of female to male enrollment in an area.

educated youth may serve as many as 150,000 more students, some proportion of which will be female. However, even if we assume that twice that number in the under-educated population has access to some educational services, the system stills fails to serve 90% of the some 3.8 million youth who need education.

Accelerated Learning (AL) in USAID's APEP Project

APEP initiated its AL program with only two implementing partners in three provinces.[11] But within months months, APEP expanded the program to 14 additional provinces, by recruiting additional partners, and increased the service population in the original 3 provinces. By March of 2004, APEP was able to foster the education of 170,000 students in more than 3000 villages throughout 17 provinces. Table 4 describes the APEP approach to fostering education.

Table 4[12]: 5 Stages in APEP AL Strategy Development for Fostering Education for Female Students

Initial Planning with NGOs Understand goals and objectives. Develop locally focused curriculum.; Develop teacher-training strategies. Work with the MoE to obtain a memo of understanding. Develop M/E system.
Community Mobilization Teams Identify Communities with Need and Internal Support Identify level of available support. Work with community councils, or *Shura,*[13] to understand the AL program opportunity. Identify class location. Recruit students and teachers. Reinforce the educational process.
Trainer and Village Teacher Trainings Implement cascade training model by preparing trainers to train teachers and teachers to teach students in Grade 1. Develop materials for teachers to teach. Translate and deliver teaching guides and needed teaching supplies. Implement master trainer trainings in the capital. Implement provincial trainer and teacher trainings in the provinces.
Initiate AL Component in the Provinces Inaugurate instruction in each selected district. Manage, monitor and collect instruction data. Support instruction with on-going coaching and periodic trainings to enable teachers to work in successive grade levels. Assist *Shuras* in supporting the education process; Institute a continuous troubleshooting and solving problem schedule.
Expansion to 14 additional provinces Recruit new NGO partners. Replicate other stages scaled to meet new expanded requirements.

Different geographical regions were selected for the AL program, as much as security concerns would permit. Some of the most educationally deprived, low-literacy and low-resource provinces were included with others with greater access to educational opportunity. Table 5 summarizes the literacy rates for provinces with AL Centers and shows the female enrollment rates in the APEP AL program and the formal government schools. In all but one province (Balkh), APEP's program has significantly more women enrolled than the formal schools. Balkh may be an exception or it may be that the data for MoE schools are from the more urban areas, whereas AL classes are in rural areas.

[11] ADA in Baghlan and Nangarhar Province, and CHA in Faryab Province.
[12] Data from APEP internal documentation of program start-up.
[13] Shuras: village councils, mostly male dominated, which focus on local educational issues.

Table 5: Summary of Literacy and Enrollment Rates for Provinces in APEP's AL Program

Province	% Illiterate*	% Females Enrolled in Formal School	Total Enrolled in APEP's AL Classes**	% Female in APEP's AL Classes**
Baghlan	74	44	10004	60
Balkh: Urban-Rural	71-78	42	9825	31
Dai Kundi /Uruzgan	79	17	10,000	61
Farah	76	21	9900	49
Faryab	85	35	9977	57
Ghazni	73	26	9805	70
Kandahar	72	16	9995	76
Kabul: Urban-Rural	36-74	46	10139	31
Kapisa	64	42	9888	74
Khost	78	Not available	9994	49
Kunduz: Urban-Rural	52-84	34	10027	63
Laghman	67	50	9384	75
Logar	63	28	10688	60
Nangarhar: Urban-Rural	59-61	41	10688	47
Paktiya	78	16	9967	49
Parwan	69	38	9948	65
Sari Pul	81	24	9765	45
*Based on MICS data, 2003-4 ; Note in some cases Urban-rural differences may be high.				
**Based on APEP's Monitoring Form 1 Data from 2nd grade				

Villages selected for AL Centers are required to demonstrate their willingness to foster an AL program including females, and to provide other educational support for the program. Selected villages had the following pre-requisites:

- Provide appropriate class location.
- Support participation by both girls and boys in the eligible age range.
- Support the use of the APEP-MOE curriculum.
- Provide class security.
- Select a mentor or village teacher, whom the project would train.
- Encourage attendance and completion of learning tasks.

Once a village is selected, APEP, through the implementing Afghan partners, pays the teachers' salaries, provides some of the educational supplies (such as paper, notebooks, exam books, writing materials, blackboard paint, etc.), and undertakes teacher training, training management, and other support of the teaching process.

APEP Target Goals, Outputs, and Numbers

The APEP AL program uses straightforward benchmarks for performance. Table 6 presents program indicators, benchmarks, and achievements based on continuous APEP monitoring reports from more than 6,800 classes throughout the 17 provinces.

Table 6: Expectations and Achievements

Expected as of 1 July 2005	Achieved as of 1 July 2005
▪ 170,000 students	▪ 169,757 students
▪ 56% female enrollment	▪ 56% female enrollment
▪ 475,000 Grade Years Completed:	▪ 474,880 Grade years completed
▫ 15,000 completed 4 years	▫ 15,000 completed 4 years
▫ 105,000 completed 3 years	▫ 105,604 completed 3 years
▫ 50,000 completed 2 years	▫ 49,272 completed 2 years
▪ 266,000 Grade Years for Women	▪ 272,546 Grade Years for Women

The female participation rate for the first few months of the project was approximately 36%, comparable to the female participation rate in the formal school system (see Table 5). Within six months, however, participation rose to 56% and dropped by only 6 to 7 percent as the students progressed through Grade 3. Table 7 describes these achievements in greater detail.

Table 7: Other APEP Project Outputs as of December 31, 2004 Projected through Project Completion, December 30, 2005

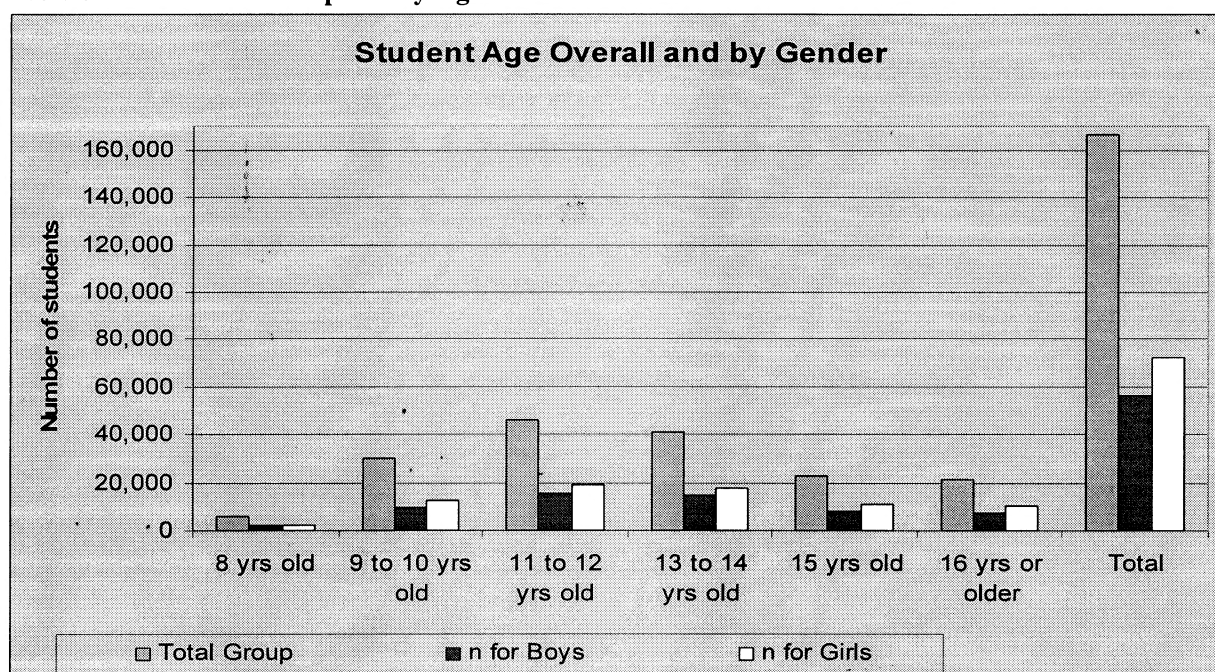
▪ Provided educational opportunities to 170,000 students (see Table 6). ▪ Established schools in 2,108 villages where there were no schools previously; and, in more than 1400 villages, where there were schools, made education accessible to students who wouldn't be admitted because either they were overage, the school had reached capacity, or the school was not gender-appropriate schools.
▪ Of the 170,000 students, 70,592 girls, and 54.232 boys, ages 8 to 14 years, were enrolled; ▪ (By December 30, 2005, 8% will have completed grade 5; 64% will have completed grade 4; and 28% will have completed grade 3.)
▪ Of the 170,000 students, 25,649 girls, and 19,525 boys, ages 15 years and older were enrolled; ▪ (By December 30, 2005, 10% will have completed grade 5; 66% will have completed grade 4; and 24% will have completed grade 3.)
▪ A 6% dropout rate, approximately half of dropout rate in the formal school system.

Were AL to be extended through grade 12, the efficiency of the educational service delivery system would double. However, we project the drop-out rate over 12 years would be 30%.

Table 7 gives tallies for young women and men who must contribute to their families' livelihoods and to their own. The largest portion of the students has no parent(s) with stable employment (25%); large portions of the parents of these students are farmers (23%), skilled laborers or professionals (19%); and merchants or shopkeepers (12%).[14] A small percent of the students are children of the APEP teachers (8%). For all students, an educational program 'opportunity' offers a difficult choice. Each hour of participation reduces the time they spend helping the family with chores or work and lowers the family's ability to stay afloat. Table 8 shows the distribution of students by age and gender. Three-quarters of the students (74%) have siblings living at home; and about one of three students has a sibling in an AL class. Successfully attracting and keeping students, especially female students, requires ongoing attention to the benefits.

[14] APEP M/E data (AL LS, Question D-6 - Note 13% did not answer the question.) For more information on M/E data, please contact jintili@aiweb.com.

Table 8: APEP AL Participants by Age and Gender[15]



Sustaining Participation and Interest in Learning

This next section analyzes student recruitment and retention and then discusses how communities related to the program, how participants performed, and what factors seemed to affect participants' performance, using data drawn from the APEP M/E system.[16] Success in student recruitment and retention seems to be a function of *i)* reminding parents and community councils to review the risks and benefits of participating; *ii)* making classroom work interesting and immediately useful; *iii)* locating schools conveniently; and *iv)* implementing a monitoring, evaluation and supervision process that reinforced attention to student participation and outcomes from the education process.

The Community in the Decision to Enroll

Community mobilization is critical for enrollment.[17] APEP's Afghan partners conducted a strong promotion campaign urging parents to send their children, and especially their daughters, to class notwithstanding the dangers of a country recovering from war[18] and the extreme constraints on

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[15] Based on APEP Monitoring Data -Form 7, items 18 and 19, and by gender for those in classes designated either male or female students. Note that as a result of Form 7 item construction for grades 1 and 2, except for single gender classes respondents were not asked student age by gender. Thus this table reports analysis on single gender-classes only - 84% of the classes. For more information on the APEP M+E instrumentation: jintili@aiweb.com.

[16] The presented findings are based on continuous monitoring reports from over 6,800 classes in 17 provinces with 170,000 students; evaluation studies in a subset of 80 classes in 10 provinces with 560 students; and 4 case studies in four class sites in two provinces. For more information on the APEP M+E instrumentation, please contact jintili@aiweb.com.

[17] Data from APEP Monitoring Form 2, collected by mobilization teams in each community prior to Grade 1. For more information on the APEP M+E instrumentation: jintili@aiweb.com.

[18] The Afghan *post*-war violence has negatively impacted the AL project at the village level; however it has not affected enthusiasm for the program. Specifically, a school bombing in Paktia claimed the lives of a teacher and